

A

S E R M O N

PREACHED IN THE PARISH CHURCH OF

St. PAUL, COVENT GARDEN,

On FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 1756.

Being the Day appointed by AUTHORITY for a

G E N E R A L F A S T.

By JOHN CRADOCK, D.D.
Rector of the Parish of St. PAUL, COVENT GARDEN.

Published at the unanimous desire of the Vestry of the said Parish, and
that of many other Inhabitants ; and addressed to Them.



L O N D O N,

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TO THE GENTLEMEN OF THE VESTRY
OF THE PARISH OF ST. PAUL, CO-
VENT GARDEN; AND THE OTHER
INHABITANTS.

GENTLEMEN AND NEIGHBOURS,

THE following discourse, which was delivered before You upon a late very solemn occasion, is now made public at the desire of many of You: Particularly, it was the unanimous opinion of the Members of the Vestry, that by this means it might be rendered of service beyond the limits of our own Parish. Upon this consideration therefore (tho' perhaps a very partial one,) as well as to shew my readiness to comply with your request, I was induced to let it appear in this manner: and if it shall, in any degree, answer your expectation; it fully will mine. I am well persuaded indeed, that there never was a season more proper than the present for making useful impressions upon the minds of people in general; and I am confirmed in this persuasion from the numbers that attended both within, and *without* our Churches, to perform their devotion upon the day appointed

appointed for a solemn Fast and Humiliation. This last circumstance furnishes me with a just occasion of observing (and it is worthy of the public consideration,) that if the inhabitants of this Metropolis were to attend divine service as regularly as they ought, the number of places at present appropriated to the worship of GOD, would not be sufficient for that purpose.

I will not conceal another motive, which disposed me the more readily to yield to your desire in the present instance: I looked upon it as a testimony of your approving the choice lately made by a truly noble Personage, in appointing me your Minister: And I was glad to embrace the opportunity of thus publicly acknowledging the very many, and great obligations, I have the honour to owe to His Grace THE DUKE OF BEDFORD.

I am,

GENTLEMEN,

Your very affectionate,

and faithful Servant,

J. CRADOCK.

JEREMIAH VI. 8.

BE THOU INSTRUCTED, O JERUSALEM, LEST MY
SOUL DEPART FROM THEE ; LEST I MAKE THEE
DESOLATE, A LAND NOT INHABITED.

SOME peculiar, and striking circumstances relating to the Jews, make their history not only more awful and affecting, but more instructive too, than that of any other people under heaven. If we consider the miseries they underwent as a collective body, and while they continued a nation ; the severity and length of their bondage in Egypt, and captivity at Babylon : If we call to mind the utter destruction of their city and nation by the Romans, with the singular circumstances of distress which attended that memorable scene : And if to these we add their dispersion, at present, thro' all parts of the world, so very unlike any thing which ever happened before ; and moreover that they have continued in this dispersed condition, without any settled form of government civil or religious, during so many centuries : We cannot but look upon Them as great and uncommon objects of divine displeasure.

But if we consider, at the same time, the particular favour which GOD shewed upon very many, and great occasions to the Jews ; by separating them from all nations of the world to be his peculiar people, and to teach them a religion, clear of the many gross corruptions which had crowded into the worship of the countries around them : What extraordinary

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care was taken to preserve this religion in its original purity among them, by forbidding all such communication and intercourse with their neighbours as might endanger a deviation from it : “ That to them pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants; and the giving of the law, and the service of GOD, and the promises; that their’s were the fathers, and of them, as concerning the flesh, Christ came.” If we recollect farther the many affectionate and earnest admonitions which GOD gave them by a continued succession of prophets, “ rising early, and sending them,” in order to apprize them of their imminent danger, and warn them, in time, to prevent the fatal consequences of their national impieties : If we take into the account too, “ that blindness is happened only in part to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in ; and so all Israel shall be saved.”—If we attend seriously to these extraordinary circumstances relating to the Jews, we shall be obliged, notwithstanding what was before remarked, to look upon Them as having been, in some respects, singular objects of divine mercy.

But that which concerns us most to consider, at present, in the history of this people, are the repeated admonitions they had received from GOD to turn from their iniquities, and amend their ways ; and the little effect such admonitions had with them, notwithstanding the affectionate manner in which they were addressed to, and the awful authority by which they were enforced upon them : But principally the fatal consequences of that notorious disregard, which they shewed, from time to time, to such solemn notices.

ROM. IX. 4. 5. JER. XXV. 4. ROM. XI. 25. 26.

And

And of the great number of these which remain to us upon record, there are perhaps few more interesting, or deserving of our notice at this time, than that in the text: Jeremiah, as other prophets before had frequently done, reminded them over and over of the direct tendency of their national wickedness, and the unavoidable consequence of persisting in it: But in the instance before us, he brings the danger home to their very doors; and not only threatens them with the near approach of the Chaldean army, but sets the battle itself in array against them; forms the siege, and even prepares the attack: And to shew with what eagerness the enemy was bent upon this enterprize against Jerusalem, he represents them as saying; "Arise, and let us go up at noon; for the day goeth away, for the shadows of the evening are stretched out: Arise, and let us go up by night, and let us destroy her palaces: For thus hath the Lord of hosts said; Hew ye down trees, and cast a mount against her."

But amidst all this dreadful preparation, and these formidable ensigns of destruction; the prophet, full of the GOD that inspired him, and like him, even in the act of judgment remembering mercy, breaks off his threatnings in order to tender this last, affectionate advice to his countrymen: "Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee; lest I make thee desolate, a land not inhabited." Take warning at last, O ye inhabitants of this great city, lest the GOD of your fathers who hath ever shewn such tender instances of his love for you, and always pitied you in your distresses, even as a father pitieth his own children: (For

we may observe that there is great tenderness, and something approaching to natural affection conveyed in this remarkable expression, "left his soul depart from thee:") Left he withdraw not only his paternal regard and affection for you; but from the tender objects of his mercy, ye become severe examples of his justice.

In what manner the inhabitants of Jerusalem received this notice, and how they acted upon it, their approaching destiny but too plainly informs us. "For the Sin of Judah, saith the Lord, is written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond: And I will cause thee to serve thine enemies in the land which thou knowest not." The desolation begun by the Chaldean army under Nebuchadnezzar now upon its march against them, was completed, in all its parts, upon their city and nation by the Roman soldiers under Titus; and their country itself left, as the prophet had foretold, "a land not inhabited."

And would to GOD, we were not furnished with too many materials for drawing a parallel between the condition of Jerusalem at the time Jeremiah uttered this prophecy, and the circumstances of our own nation at this day! For has not GOD warned Us to be instructed, by as awful notices as words can describe, or even imagination conceive; and perhaps more alarming than were ever given before? If we have not a Northern army, as was the case with Jerusalem at the time of this prophecy, now at our gates; yet are we without just apprehensions of a very formidable Southern enemy upon our coasts? Whether we will in time take warning, repent and amend our ways,

JER. XVII. 1. 4.

and

and thereby engage the GOD of hosts in our defense, is yet within our own bosom ; and that of time to discover : For whatever shall be our conduct for the future ; it is certainly such at present, as cannot safely be interposed as a barrier between ourselves, and either the judgments of heaven, or machinations of earth against us.——Here then let us drop the curtain for awhile : There will be opportunities enow, before the conclusion of this discourse, to open the scene, if it is capable of yielding us an agreeable prospect.

From the words of the text thus introduced, and explained, I shall take occasion to shew ;

I. First, the expediency of national retrospection, and the necessity there is that communities, and public bodies of men should carefully review, and seriously consider the general tendency of their public conduct.

II. And this great truth being established, I shall then suggest to you the peculiar propriety, and infinite importance of paying a due attention to It, at this awful solemnity, and under the present circumstances of our nation.

III. Both which will lead to such reflections, as may be of singular use in making us sensible of our past, and regulating our future conduct.

And, first, as to the expediency of national retrospection, and the necessity there is that communities and public bodies of men should carefully review, and seriously consider the general tendency of their public conduct. Now whatever may be the fate of this proposition, as to the manner of handling it, you must allow it to be a serious, and most interesting subject.

GOD is not only the great and supreme, but also a wise, just, and good governor of the world ; and from the moral
attributes

attributes of his nature, all his ordinances derive their influence, and take their particular colour and complexion: Happiness was undoubtedly the main purpose and design of GOD in the work of creation, and virtue is the universal means to attain that end: For it is as impossible that vice should, in its consequences, be productive of happiness; as that evil can be of the essence of the divine nature, or that GOD, in his dispensations, can act inconsistently with himself.

This is agreeable to the general course, and established order of things in the world; and holds equally true in relation to the conduct of communities, and individuals. For tho' some political institutions may be of so robust a make, the union of their parts so compact and entire, and their texture so firm; that whatever be the conduct of the individuals who compose them, they will, humanly speaking, hold out much longer than others, which have not these original advantages; as some bodies are naturally so strong, as, for a time, to retain their vigour, and preserve all the appearance of health, under the freest indulgences of intemperance and excess: Yet what imperceptibly weakens, and of course hastens the dissolution of the one; will unavoidably bring on, and, in the end, certainly effect the destruction of the other.

There is the same reason then why states and communities, if they expect to continue and prosper as such, should attend to the natural consequences of their general demeanour; as that private men, if they intend to preserve their life and health, should have a regard to the usual effects of their ordinary conduct: The expediency in each case is equal,
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and founded upon the same motive, that of self-preservation ; which always has been, and ever will be the leading principle in political, as well as natural life.

But that which, sooner or later, must happen in the natural course, and according to the general constitution of things, often meets with a speedier accomplishment from the immediate interposition of GOD, in order to serve particular purposes of his Providence : Who, as he chastises private persons for wise and salutary ends, sometimes also punishes communities, as such, to a certain degree ; that they may in time perceive their error, and reform their ways : Or, if the measure of their iniquity is already filled up, sometimes destroys them utterly for examples of his justice to others.—And thus it fared with the old world : “ For when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and GOD saw the wickedness of man was great therein : He said unto Noah, the end of all flesh is come before me, for the earth is filled with violence thro’ them ; and behold I will destroy them with the earth : And the same day that Noah went into the ark, were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened ; and every living substance was destroyed from the earth : And Noah only remained alive, and those that were with him in the ark.” Thus likewise, “ because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah was great, and because their Sin was very grievous ; GOD rained upon them brimstone and fire from out of heaven, and overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which was upon the ground.”

GEN. VI. 1. 5. 13. VII. 11. XIX. 24. 25.

History,

History, sacred and profane, will furnish many instances of the same kind: But I have the rather chosen to select these for your notice at this time, because you are not only well acquainted with the authority upon which the facts are delivered down to us, but have moreover infallible assurance, that "all these things happened to them for examples; and are written for our admonition also, upon whom the ends of the world are come."

The expediency then of national retrospection, and in consequence of that, of a general reformation of manners, in order to national preservation, and the security of public happiness; is founded in the settled course, and established order of nature: Reason dictates, prudence enforces it: Observation, authority, and the universal experience of all ages and countries, confirm the absolute necessity of it.

II. This great Truth being established; I proceed to shew you the peculiar propriety, and infinite importance of paying a due attention to It, at this awful solemnity, and under the present circumstances of our nation.

A subject large and copious, as it is serious and interesting: And upon which I might well be at a loss where to begin, were there not a path chalked out to me so plain and open, that the wayfaring man, tho' a fool, cannot err therein. I am certain you anticipate my meaning, by referring your thoughts to those awakening notices, which GOD has so lately given the inhabitants of the earth, to repent of the evil of their doings, and amend their ways: The amazing event is in the mouth, and I sincerely hope at the heart of every person.

1 COR. X. 11. 2 PET. II. 5. 6. JUDE 7.

But

But the point before us is this: Whether we see these notices in a proper light, and suffer them to have their due influence upon us: For if we consider these convulsions in nature merely as the consequences of common causes, or affect to account for them altogether upon the mechanical principles of philosophy; without carrying our thoughts, at least, one step farther, and reflecting, at the same time, upon the great ends, which it is not barely possible, but highly probable, Providence might have to serve by such astonishing effects: We are then got but a very little way indeed; and have left, by far, the better half of our work unfinished.

For what are natural causes, but powers impressed by GOD upon unintelligent matter, to cause it to fulfill, by its operations, the purposes of his Providence? The artist contrives a machine, and puts the wheels of it into motion; but does he not, at pleasure, retard or quicken the degree of motion communicated to them, as he sees it will better answer the end for which the machine was intended? And shall the Almighty artist then be debarred this privilege? Shall He only be excluded from a power over the works of his own hands? For tho', in general, GOD conducts the great machine of the universe by uniform and stated laws; yet may he not, as he shall see occasion; and in fact Has he not sometimes made alterations in the course of these laws, to serve particular purposes of his wisdom or goodness? There can be no satisfactory reason assigned why events, which are apparently brought about by second causes, should not be ascribed to the immediate appointment of Providence: For what are second causes, but instruments in the

hands of GOD to accomplish whatever seemeth good unto him ; ministers of his that do his pleasure, that fulfill his commandment, and execute the voice of his word ? Therefore when we speak of things being brought about by chance, or accident, we suppose a cause of events which does not exist, but in our own imagination ; and thereby discover only our ignorance of causes, which we are not able to explain, or account for.

“ But who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge, and taketh upon him to unfold, and explain all the mysteries in the ways of Providence with as much ease and familiarity, as if he had been admitted into the most secret councils of the Almighty ? Knowest thou, vile reptile, the ordinances of heaven ; cans't thou set the dominion thereof in the earth ? Hast thou entered into the treasures of the *nitre*, or hast thou seen the beds of *sulphur* ; which GOD hath reserved against the time of trouble, against the day of perplexity and distress ? Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea, or hast thou walked in the search of the depth ? Have the gates of hell been opened unto thee, or hast thou seen the doors of the shadow of death ?”

Does it become Us to trifle away that time, in search of natural causes to account for such alarming events, which ought to be instantly employed in considering their proper effects, and laying to heart their dreadful consequences ? Is this piety ? Is it prudence in us ? And for fear of sliding into superstition, shall we sink, at once, into downright atheism ? Which of the two is the more dangerous extreme, I appeal to all who hear me. “ But ask now the beasts, and they

JOB XXXVIII. 33. 22. 23. 16. 17. JOB XII. 7. 8. 9. shall

shall teach thee ; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee : Or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee, and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee : Who knoweth not, in all these, that the hand of the Lord hath wrought This ?” There is no end of cavilling at this rate, nor any bounds to be set to such unlicensed scepticism.

But, says this adept in the mysteries of doubting, the great question still remains unanswered ; How we are to distinguish between general effects in the ordinary course of nature, and particular judgments ?—Peace awhile, presumptuous and vain man : A truce only for a short space ; and thy scepticism shall be driven from all its holds and shifting-places.—For supposing that to be true, which by no means we allow to be so ; that the late convulsions in the earth were owing entirely to natural causes, and not to any particular interposition of Providence : Yet we know by melancholy information, that they occasioned, almost in an instant, the death of thousands ; when the earth opened, and swallowed them up quick. What has once happened, may again ; and perhaps the sooner, for having happened so lately : There is the same reason then, in one case, as the other, that thou shouldest be prepared against so sudden an event, and hold thyself in readiness to attend the summons of thy omnipotent judge. Thou art not without thy apprehensions, upon the occasion, any more than the man who sees these things in another, and more serious light ; only with this difference, that Thine arise from abject fear ; His, from reverence and a religious awe.

But in answer to the question which was before asked ; How are we to distinguish, at last, between ordinary events,

and uncommon cases? Let it suffice, in general, to reply; That the proceedings of infinite justice, are clearly and perfectly known only to infinite wisdom.—However I will endeavour to help thee to a clew, that, at least, may be of some assistance to guide thee in thy wanderings thro' these mazes of Providence. The world is not now in its infancy, neither are we, at this age of it, to learn over again the rudiments and first principles of religion, natural or revealed: GOD does not manifest himself to us now by immediate inspiration, or any direct communications of his will; but leaves us to read it in his Word, and his Works. The characters in each are fair and legible, and so plain, that he who runs may read them.—There are then circumstances often attending the remarkable events, which are brought about in the course of the world, that give them all the appearance of a divine interposition: And such, in particular, are these which follow: The surprising greatness of them; a concurrence of circumstances; and the coincidence of times.

And if the first of these marks was almost ever more discernible at one time than another, it was certainly so at the time, in which our earth received the late dreadful shock, that hath given occasion to this day's solemnity: And which, for the violence or extent of it, was such; as neither we, nor our fathers had felt, or read, or heard of before: Three of the great quarters of the globe were sensible, tho' not equally, of the terrible effects of it; and it is probable we shall receive accounts of the like kind from the fourth. The waters of the great deep did swell, and rage horribly; the earth was moved; and shook to its

its inmost centre; " the pillars of heaven trembled, and were astonished at thy reproof, O GOD!" The supine and careless; the unthinking, and unfeeling, who have passed their hours, and days, and years in that land of insensibility, where all things which are great, or good, or benevolent are forgotten; cannot but be awakened by notices like these, and roused from a state of inactivity, and too fatal security: Even the wicked and abandoned must tremble, when the Great hand which conducts the universe is so very visible in directing the movements of it; and its weight is felt under the throes and convulsions of nature: " And when God, in the language of the prophet, ariseth to shake *so* terribly the earth."

But lest a single notice should be overlooked, or mistaken, GOD is pleased frequently to repeat the warning; that when his judgments follow close, one upon another, in the earth; the inhabitants of the world may be without excuse, if they do not then learn righteousness: Which concurrence of circumstances, is another mark of a divine interposition, before pointed out to you.

It is certain, that many of the great and astonishing events which have happened in the world, have been accompanied by signs and wonders like those, which our Lord himself foretold should precede that remarkable period, the destruction of Jerusalem: " For ye shall then; says he, hear of wars, and rumours of wars; for nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes in divers places." If we of this country have hitherto escaped

JOB. XXVI. 11.

ISA. II. 19.

MATT. XXIV. 6. 7.

any

any of these visitations, it is that of famine; but if we have not suffered, we have certainly deserved it; and therefore how soon it may be our lot to endure it, That GOD only knows, "Who maketh a fruitful land barren, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein." Do we trust to any natural, or civil advantages our country boasts above others? Yet what is our kingdom to the great empires which have had their rise, their height, and their fall in world? Or what indeed is our city, (great and populous as it is) to Babylon of old? "Is not this, said Nebuchadnezzar, Great Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty? But, while the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee." And if a son ariseth, who seeth the iniquity of his father, and forsaketh it not, but followeth after it; the seat of empire shall pass, at once, from the Chaldeans to the Medes; and the kingdom be transferred from Belshazzar to Darius.

But farther; such violent and unusual agitations as have been lately felt in the earth, and which demand a particular attention at this time, are called in Scripture divine visitations: "For thou shalt be visited of the Lord of hosts, saith the prophet to Jerusalem, with thunder and with earthquake:" And they have not only been looked upon as great and remarkable events, but even as solemn and distinguishing aeras: For thus begins the prophecy of Amos: "The words of Amos, which he saw concerning Israel, in the

PSAL. CVII. 34.
AMOS. I. 1.

DAN. IV. 30. 31.
ZECH. XIV. 5.

V. 30. 31.

Is. XXIX. 6.

days

days of Jeroboam king of Israel; two years before the earthquake."

As to the last mark of a divine interposition in the course of human affairs, which was mentioned before; The coincidence of times: What is here meant by it, is this; that there are seasons, in which, if the inhabitants of any land suffer to a remarkable degree; their visitations (of whatever kind they are) may then be interpreted not unfairly, or uncharitably, judgments; especially if there appears to be any striking, or corresponding likeness between the prevailing vices of a nation, and the particular manner of chastising them.

And oh, that I was here authorized to draw a veil before your eyes, and intercept the dismal prospect which your own country opens to you! "Or that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears; that I might weep day and night (if that could avail ought towards averting the judgments of heaven against us,) for the sins of my native land!"—"Or shall I speak unto you smooth things, and prophecy deceits?" That would ill become my office; and worse the particular relation in which I stand to You.

Let us then seriously consider, that we have not so much to fear from the open and avowed violence of foreign enemies; as from the secret and formidable attacks of domestic foes; our national impieties: For if this country be not yet ripe for destruction, and hath not already filled up the measure of its iniquity; yet it were most earnestly to be wished we could with greater appearance of truth affirm, that, in the present situation, it does not bear too strong a

JER. IX. 1.

Is. XXX. 19.

resemblance,

resemblance, and, in many respects, approach too near to that devoted period.

For what lukewarmness and indifference is shewn as to every thing sacred, or serious, Public Charity only excepted? For, in this single instance, I will even yet venture to call "this great nation, a wise, and understanding people": And I look upon the exertion of this spirit of public benevolence, in offering instant relief, under almost every malady or misfortune to which human nature is subject, to be the great, if not the only barrier, of our public safety.

What a general disregard is there of decency, and contempt of morals among us? How impatient are persons in high life under any, the least, restraint; and how far above controul? How false a shame discovers itself in men of all ranks, even the very lowest, for fear they should be so much as suspected, of being influenced by religious principles? What an amazing insensibility is there, in very many of this last class, of their duty to GOD? What a neglect of the honest and industrious means of providing for their families? And what inhumanity is often expressed and exerted towards the tenderest objects of them? Nay what barbarity is daily exercised by these persons in our streets (to the great offence of humanity) towards the wiser beasts, and more compassionate brutes?

What a general and shameful neglect is there of public worship? No good sign that private and family-devotion is kept up, and practised as it ought to be: What a monstrous prostitution of the sabbath, and appropriation of it to every kind of purpose but That, for which it was ordained by the great Lord of heaven and earth? This day of

DEUT. IV. 6.

hallowed

hallowed rest, set apart for the service and honour of our Creator, is given up by some to business ; by more to diversion and riot.—The practice of other countries is pleaded in justification of usages too frequent and notorious upon this day ; but if the example is a bad one, is it therefore to be followed, and shall we be led by a multitude to do evil ? But the fact is ; that in countries, where so pure a form of worship does not obtain as in our own, people, in general, are strict in their observance of the great duties of the sabbath, tho' blameable as to particular usages upon it : On the contrary, we in this land of liberty, (or shall I not rather say licentiousness ?) are constant in the practices, alluded to, upon this day ; but scandalously remiss as to our observance of the duties of it : We do the one, and leave the other undone.

What extravagance prevails thro' all orders and degrees of men ? What a spirit of gaming is there in the nation (the great bane of it) at this hour ? The excess of this evil was heretofore plundering within the law, it is now become robbing above it : The train of ills this vice draws after it, is formidable : One, to extricate himself from the distresses in which it involves him, puts a period to his own being : Another, that he may be able to answer the honourable engagements it has drawn him into, not only invades the property, but sometimes attempts the life too of his fellow-citizen : No ties, natural, civil, or religious, can bind youth or age addicted to this foul habit, for a passion I cannot call it : Under its all-controuling influence, the apprentice scruples not to steal from the artificer, the servant from his master, the son from his father.

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But have we fairer hopes, or a more promising prospect from the rising generation before us? Is there the same care taken to cultivate the minds, as to form the bodies of children? to make them virtuous, as wellbred? and to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, as in a knowledge of the ways and commerce of the world?—And what will the end of these things be? We foresee the consequences, and, one day, shall certainly feel them.

Vice wears not now, as formerly, the vizard, nor affects the guise of virtue; it skulks no longer in corners and by-places; but intemperance, impurity, profaneness, and abominable execrations, appear open and barefaced; and meet us even in the very streets and highways: Other sins indeed seek, by such wicked industry, the shade; and intrench themselves so deep, and by such shameful numbers in their native darkness; as to require the diligence of the most active, and almost to elude the circumspection of the most vigilant magistrate.—And will not all good and pious persons (for many such, I trust, there are now present) unite their endeavours to force these strong holds of satan, and vanquish these formidable powers of darkness? For how can we otherwise expect, than by national piety, to avert national judgments? And indeed without a speedy resolution to put in practice the former; may we not pronounce of Our Jerusalem, as the prophet did of His, “THIS is the city to be visited?”—Let every one then contribute his mite towards the great expence, which a general reformation must cost: For who knows of what effectual service the warm endeavours of, even, a single person may be upon

JER. VI. 6.

this

this occasion? Or who can say, he will not be one of the righteous Ten to save the city? Let persons in all relations of life; fathers, masters, friends, lend an helping hand towards accomplishing this absolutely necessary work: It is what the religion of nature, and of the Gospel teacheth: This is indeed true patriotism; the love of our neighbour, the love of our country, and the love of GOD, united in one solemn act.

III. The necessity of a general reformation in our manners, in order to national preservation, being established; and the peculiar propriety likewise shewn, of paying a due attention to this great truth at this awful solemnity, and under the present circumstances of our country: Each of these particulars, as was before observed, will lead to such reflections, as may be of singular use in making us sensible of our past, and regulating our future conduct.

We are called upon, this day, by public authority to perform a solemn FAST unto the Lord, upon the great occasion which has brought us together: But it is not to be imagined, that the principal parts of an acceptable fast (such as humiliation, repentance, pious purposes of amendment, with petitions to GOD for his grace to confirm us in them, and good works,) should be confined to; or can be comprised within the space of twelve, or twenty-four hours. No: This is not the fast which GOD hath chosen, or that which is intended by the present appointment: THIS is not to be the fast of a day, a month, or a year only, but the fast of our whole lives; the solemnity of ALL our days to come: The late dreadful Earthquake ought to be made (as others which were much less

terrible have before been made) an æra; the GREAT AERA of our reformation! If we are not better for this day's solemnity, we shall certainly be much the worse for it: Our last state then, will be worse than our first; and it had been better for us, the Day had not been appointed.

There never was a stronger call, than at this time, upon the ministers of the Gospel "to cry aloud, and spare not; to lift up their voice like a trumpet, and to shew the people their transgressions, and the inhabitants of this land their sins:" I hope, in GOD, such another may never fall to my lot again!—I have endeavoured however to discharge my conscience, and, in some measure, my duty to You upon this occasion; and it has been my aim, and my care herein, not so much to reprove, as to exhort you: "For my heart's desire, and prayer to GOD for you is, that ye may be saved:" And particularly, that the exhortations now given you (unequal, as I am truly sensible they are, to the great occasion which demands them) may not be lost upon you; and that a neglect of them may not be one of the things which shall hereafter rise up in judgment against you.

But to relieve you for awhile under the melancholy prospect; and afford you hopes even under the present circumstances of our nation. Let us reflect, that GOD is infinite in mercy, as well as justice; and that "to Him belong mercies and forgivenesses, tho' we have rebelled against him." For when the lot was almost cast, and the fate of Jerusalem (consequently too the captivity of its inhabitants) upon the very point of being determined: What was, even then, the affectionate advice of GOD to his people?

Is. LVIII. 1.

ROM. X. 1.

DAN. IX. 9.

" Amend

“ Amend your ways, and your doings; and I will cause You to dwell in this land.”

The present solemnity, and your recollection of the great occasion of it, will furnish matter for many serious reflections, and pious resolutions: And may Ye improve the opportunities, which it shall offer, of both; to your preservation here, and salvation hereafter!—In the mean time let me entreat your attention to the following meditations, till ye shall be supplied with better, upon this occasion.

LET us lift up our hearts, with our hands, unto GOD in the heavens; and say, spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to confusion: Thou hast been displeased; O turn Thee unto us again, and let thine anger cease from us. Our sins testify against us; our iniquities are gone over our head, and, like a sore burden, are too heavy for us to bear; therefore, O Lord, correct us but with judgment, not in thine anger, lest Thou bring us to nothing; and, in the midst of judgment, remember mercy!—Grant, that we may neither impiously presume, upon our own deliverance from the great calamities which have lately befallen other nations, to think ourselves righteous; nor uncharitably reflect upon Them, in having suffered these things, as being sinners above other men: Make us to know, and feel, that it is of thy mercies WE were not consumed; and that except we repent, we shall ALL likewise perish: Teach us to pity, and incline us to relieve the distresses of others in their present calamitous situation; lest the earth open, and swallow us up also!—Grant, that we may seek Thee while Thou art to be found, and call upon Thee

while Thou art near unto us; and that we may in time perceive, and pursue the things which belong unto our peace; and before they are for ever hid from our eyes!

A N D, in particular, grant O great and gracious G O D, our Creator, and most merciful Preserver, that we may be duly instructed, and in the manner we ought, by the awful solemnity of T H I S day: That we may, at length, take warning by the alarming notices which Thou hast so lately given us, to flee from sin, as from the face of a serpent; and to turn to Thee with all our heart, and with all our mind: Left thy soul depart from us; left Thou withdraw not only the tender instances of regard and affection, which Thou hast shewn, upon so many occasions, to this nation; but left Thou be provoked to withdraw also thy ordinary care and protection of us: Left Thou make Us, as some other nations N O W are, desolate; and left Thou leave Our country, as some other countries are left at T H I S day, a place for wild beasts to lie down in, a desert without people, a land not inhabited!

T H E E N D.

